
Economic Development

The City of Cambridge works to promote and maintain a healthy economic environment, through business support and job creation. A supportive business climate is essential to maintaining high employment levels in the city as well as attracting new companies. The City of Cambridge is a regional employment center with approximately 4,000 businesses (excluding self-employed persons with no employees) and over 100,000 jobs. Local businesses provide many goods and services desired by residents. The tax revenue generated by companies enables the City to provide municipal services to residents that enhance the overall quality of life. Furthermore, because two thirds of the city's property taxes are paid by businesses, the tax burden placed on residents is eased.

Throughout the 1990s the economy of Cambridge continued to shift from a former manufacturing base to high tech, institutional, research, and service based industries. In addition, the presence of a relatively large number of top institutions in the region, including Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has helped to create an entrepreneurial environment for start-up firms and ventures. This atmosphere is favorable to businesses of all sizes associated with high tech research and products, including software, medical, and biotech companies.

Other factors that enhance the overall business climate and attractiveness of Cambridge include the availability of capital from numerous banks, investors, and venture capitalists; the

quality of life in the city; a pedestrian scale; a diverse population; relatively low crime; and entertainment, cultural and recreational opportunities.

Porter Square is located on Massachusetts Avenue on the borders of the Agassiz neighborhood, Neighborhood 9, and North Cambridge and is the primary commercial district in the Agassiz neighborhood. Within Porter Square are a number of retail, commercial, and educational establishments. There are several types of commercial uses of varying size and specialty in an outdoor shopping center; a medium sized mixed-use commercial and educational center; and a relatively small indoor shopping center. In addition, there are various retail, restaurant, and office uses along Massachusetts Avenue in the area. In addition to being a source of jobs, the businesses present in Porter Square provide goods and services to the Agassiz neighborhood as well as other areas of Cambridge, and to some extent the region.

There appear to be very limited opportunities for the addition or expansion of commercial uses in the Agassiz neighborhood. Much like the rest of the city, the Agassiz neighborhood has a small supply of available commercial real estate. Any new commercial development will most likely occur as a result of redevelopment or new establishments replacing existing ones, rather than any extensive new construction.

Educational institutions in the neighborhood are also a significant source of employment for Agassiz residents. Harvard University and Lesley University are located within the neighborhood

and almost 40% of the workforce in the Agassiz neighborhood is employed in education.

The education and skill levels of the labor force in the Agassiz neighborhood appear to be suited to meet the demands of new industries in Cambridge. Residents in the Agassiz neighbor-

hood over the age of 25 have a higher level of education than the city as a whole. The percentage of residents in the Agassiz neighborhood with a college degree is 83.4% while the percentage of city residents with a college degree is 54.2%.

Education Level of Cambridge Residents 1980 and 1990

	1980	1990	Change	(%) Change	(%) of 1980 City Population	(%) of 1990 City Population
Cambridge (25yrs and older)	58,013	63,471	5458	9.4%	100.0%	100.0%
Less than 9 th grade	8,393	4,501	-3892	-46.4%	14.5%	7.1%
Some high school	5,428	5,430	2	0.0%	9.4%	8.6%
High school graduate or equivalent	12,280	10,057	-2223	-18.1%	21.2%	15.8%
Some college, or Associate Degree	6,911	9,098	2187	31.6%	11.9%	14.3%
Bachelor Degree or Graduate/Professional Degree	25,001	34,385	9384	37.5%	43.1%	54.2%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, UDAP Analysis of Cambridge Neighborhoods, 1990

Education Level of Agassiz Neighborhood Residents 1980 and 1990

	1980	1990	Total Change	(%) Change	As (%) of 1980 Neighborhood Population	As (%) of 1990 Neighborhood Population
Agassiz (25yrs and older)	3,063	3,248	185	6.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Less than 9 th grade	63	26	-37	-58.7%	2.1%	0.8%
Some high school	83	52	-31	-37.3%	2.7%	1.6%
High School graduate or equivalent	273	181	-92	-33.7%	8.9%	5.6%
Some college, or Associate Degree	282	279	-3	-1.1%	9.2%	8.6%
Bachelor Degree or Graduate/Professional Degree	2,362	2,710	348	14.7%	77.1%	83.4%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, UDAP Analysis of Cambridge Neighborhoods, 1990

Agassiz Neighborhood Employment by Occupation 1980 and 1990 (top categories)

	1980	1990	Total Change	(%) Change	As (%) of 1980 Neighborhood Population	As (%) of 1990 Neighborhood Population
Total Employees	2,697	2,665	-32	-1.2%	100.0%	100.0%
Exec/Admin/Managerial	366	446	80	21.9%	13.6%	16.7%
Professional/Specialty	1,312	1,217	-95	-7.2%	48.6%	45.7%
Technical/Tech. Support	156	267	111	71.2%	5.8%	10.0%
Sales	163	170	7	4.3%	6.0%	6.4%
Admin. Support/Clerical	298	261	-37	-12.4%	11.0%	9.8%

Source: 1990 U. S. Census Bureau, UDAP Analysis of Cambridge Neighborhoods, 1990.

Agassiz Neighborhood Employment by Industry 1980 and 1990 (top categories)

	1980	1990	Total Change	(%) Change	As (%) of 1980 Neighborhood Population	As (%) of 1990 Neighborhood Population
Total Employees	2,697	2,665	-32	-1.2%	100.0%	100.0%
Wholesale/Retail Trade	292	233	-59	-20.2%	10.8%	8.7%
Person/Enter't/Rec.Services	98	151	53	54.1%	3.6%	5.7%
Health Services	264	222	-42	-15.9%	9.8%	8.3%
Education	1,080	1,006	-74	-6.9%	40.0%	37.7%
Other Prof/Related Services	347	439	92	26.5%	12.9%	16.5%

Source: 1990 U. S. Census Bureau, UDAP Analysis of Cambridge Neighborhoods, 1990.

According to the 1990 US Census, Agassiz ranks second in the City in terms of median family income (\$55,407 versus \$39,990 for the City as a whole). Only 4.0% of the Agassiz civilian workforce was unemployed in 1990 (compared to 5.2% of the City as a whole). As the above tables indicate most residents in the Agassiz neighbor-

hood are employed in professional and specialty occupations (46%) compared to 31% for the City of Cambridge (U.S. Census 1990). In 1990 the industry that employed the largest number of Agassiz residents was education (37.7%), which in contrast employed 26.2% of all city residents.

City of Cambridge Labor Force 1980 and 1990

	1980	1990	Total Change	(%) Change	As (%) of Total 1980 Neighborhood Population	As (%) of Total 1990 Neighborhood Population
Cambridge (16 yrs. or older)	82,461	83,720	1259	1.5%	100.0%	100.0%
Civilian Labor Force	52,014	57,038	5024	9.7%	63.1%	68.1%
Unemployed	2,332	2,941	609	26.1%	4.5%	5.2%

Source: 1990 U. S. Census Bureau, UDAP Analysis of Cambridge Neighborhoods, 1990.

Agassiz Neighborhood Labor Force 1980 and 1990

	1980	1990	Total Change	(%) Change	As (%) of Total 1980 Neighborhood Population	As (%) of Total 1990 Neighborhood Population
Agassiz (16 yrs. or older)	4,884	4,715	-169	-3.5pop%	100.0%	100.0%
Civilian Labor Force	2,760	2,776	16	0.6%	56.5%	58.9%
Unemployed	63	111	48	76.2%	2.3%	4.0%

Source: 1990 U. S. Census Bureau, UDAP Analysis of Cambridge Neighborhoods, 1990.

The Agassiz Study Committee felt that diverse types of businesses should be encouraged in the

neighborhood, especially establishments for which there are a need in the neighborhood.

Economic Development Recommendations

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1. The Committee encourages the creation of pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood-oriented uses of commercial spaces along Massachusetts Avenue and throughout the Agassiz neighborhood.
 2. The City should develop a formalized plan to communicate with the Agassiz Neighborhood

Council about types of new businesses that would be useful in the neighborhood. Example: Currently, a bakery is needed in the neighborhood.

3. The Committee supports Harvard's established practice of reduced rents to diverse retail tenants.



Porter Exchange Building, 1815 Massachusetts Avenue

Conclusion

The goal of the Agassiz Neighborhood Study is consistent with that of all neighborhood studies: to provide a framework for incorporating local knowledge and concerns into the decision-making process of City officials, staff, and boards charged with long-term planning. While these decision-makers must balance a wide variety of interests, considerations, and constraints, it is hoped that the preceding study can provide clear guidance for the issues of concern in the Agassiz neighborhood.

In many ways, the concerns reflected in the recommendations of the Agassiz Study Committee are similar to those of Cambridge residents generally. Both within the Agassiz neighborhood and throughout the city, people have indicated the need for greater availability and affordability of housing, effective regulation of development, management of traffic and parking pressures,

improvement and expansion of open spaces, and strengthening neighborhood businesses. However, by looking at these issues of broader concern on the neighborhood level, the Agassiz Study Committee has developed detailed descriptions, recommendations, and proposed actions to help inform specific responses to complicated issues affecting quality of life.

In keeping with the spirit of the recently developed policy of updating neighborhood studies, this report should be viewed as a living document that will evolve as the result of both intentional actions and unexpected circumstances. Specifically, it is anticipated that the recommendations and proposed actions of the Agassiz Neighborhood Study will be reviewed and updated periodically.